

Kuwaiti Arabic

Kuwaiti (in Kuwaiti كويتي, /kweːti/) is a Gulf Arabic dialect spoken in Kuwait. Kuwaṭī Arabic shares many phonetic features unique to Gulf dialects. Due to Kuwait's soap opera industry, Kuwaiti Arabic spread throughout the Arabic-speaking world and became familiar even to people in countries such as Tunisia and Jordan.^{[4][5]}

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History and Development

Since Kuwait was a nation of immigrants with no native population, Kuwait has a different sociolinguists structure. Three groups make up the Kuwaiti population: the first being the descendant of Arab tribes, while the second are people originally from al-Hasa, Bahrain and Iraq, and the third are people originally from Persia (modern-day Iran), known in Kuwait by the name Ayam^[1].

Kuwaiti Arabic is rapidly changing due to many factors.^[6]

Phonology^[7]

Emphatics

/b/, /f/, /l/, /m/, /n/ and /r/ become the emphatics ḃ, f̣, ḷ, ṡ, ṣ, and ṛ only when they are in the contiguity of an emphatic, a back vowel, or if they precede /aː/.

Kuwaiti	
كويتي	
Pronunciation	[kweːti]
Native to	Grane, <div></div> nowadays State of Kuwait
Native speakers	1.3 million (L1 only, approx.) (2016) ^[1] <div></div> L2 negligible
Language family	<div>Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Central Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Arabic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Peninsular<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gulf<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kuwaiti</div>
Writing system	Arabic, with addition of 3 or 4 letters. ^[2]
Signed forms	Kuwaiti Sign Language <div>(لغة الإشارة الكويتية)</div>
Official status	
Official language in	Not official in any country
Regulated by	Not recognised as a language
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	none
ISO 639-3	—
Glottolog	kuwa1251 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kuwa1251) ^[3]

Varieties

Kuwaiti is divided into two varieties: Urban (Sedentary) and Nomadic or Bedouin.^[8] The first is believed to have developed due to exposure to the outside world, as well as Kuwait being a country of multi-regional immigrants during its infancy. The Urban dialect is seen as more prestigious than the Bedouin one.^[9]

The Urban dialect is divided into four sub-dialects, while the Bedouin is divided into two.^[10] The four sedent dialects are:

- Sharq: Mainly used by Ayam people, who settled the district. It is a result of a mixture of the various different dialects spoken in Kuwait in the past.^[11] (See also Sharq)^[12]
- Jibla (See also Jibla)
- Failicha (See also Failicha Island, Kuwait)
- Fintaas (See also Fintaas, Kuwait)

While the two Bedouin varieties are:

- Jahra (See also Jahra, Kuwait)
- Dimna: Used mainly by the descendants of Al-Azmy tribe. ad-Dimna is the old name of Salmiya City, Kuwait

Historians and researchers usually demonstrate differences between the dialects using the Kuwaiti word for Sugar, which has three different pronunciation. It is pronounced Shikar (/ʃɪkər/) in Sharg dialect, Shakar (/ʃəkər/) in Fintaas dialect, and Shakir (/ʃəkɪr/) in Jibla dialect.^{[13][14][15]}

Status

Dashti identifies four varieties of Arabic in Kuwait. Classical Arabic (CA), the language of the Quran, the liturgical language of Islam, the religion of the vast majority of Kuwaitis, and old Arabic literature, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the medium of formal communication and school education. This variety is considered the second language of Kuwaitis as they are only introduced to when they start school. Kuwaiti Arabic (KA), the language of everyday's life and the symbol of the Kuwaiti identity. It is a symbol of prestige in the Kuwaiti society. The last variety is Educated Standard Arabic (ESA), in which the speaker mixes between MSA and KA. This language is used in Radio, TV, and academics' informal discussions. Kuwait is diglossic, like the rest of the Arab world, with the Arabic language being seen as the high variety, while Kuwaiti is seen more like a patois or a low-variety colloquial dialect of Arabic.^{[16][17]}

Kuwaiti is the "normal" way of speaking in everyday's life and is acquired naturally at home and not taught at schools (as it is considered a mere dialect of the Arabic language by the public).

After conducting several interviews with speakers of Kuwaiti, Akbar states that for many, speaking Kuwaiti is the most important criterion of being considered Kuwaiti.^[18]

Features and characteristics

Kuwaiti Arabic is a variant of Gulf Arabic, sharing similarities with the dialects of neighboring coastal areas in Eastern Arabia.^[19] Due to immigration during its early history as well as trade, Kuwaiti was influenced by many languages such as Persian, English, Italian, Urdu, Turkish, and others.^[20]

A characteristic in Kuwait is the use of words and phrases by women exclusively, for example "يا حافِظ", roughly translated to "Oh Saver [God]", is rarely or never used by men.^[21] It also differs from other Arabic variants in the way phonological assimilation occurs to a multitude of words, but not to all of them. The only case of full assimilation is /dˤ/ changing to /ðˤ/ in all words.

Differences between Arabic and Kuwaiti

Standard Arabic is a dead language; meaning it is not spoken natively by people anymore. Each variety of Arabic has evolved and developed over time. Some of the differences between the formal Arabic and Kuwaiti are:

- Kuwaiti uses SVO more often (unless the subject is omitted because of the verb's conjugation), while Modern Standard Arabic uses VSO most of the time. There may be a relationship between definiteness and pragmatic factors that control the choice of VSO vs. SVO in Kuwaiti and other Arabic varieties.^[22]
- Copulas are used in Kuwaiti, unlike Arabic. Below is a table of copulas used in Kuwaitis:

Note: Copulas are used before verbs only, not adjectives. For example: I am drinking, not I ~~am~~ drunk. Note also that many linguists define copulas as expressing identity and "is-a" relations. Since the following "copulas" are only use before verbs, they may be classified as aspectual particles.

Verb	In Kuwaiti	Transliteration
am, is	قَعَامُ قَاعِدًا قَاعًا قَعَدَ	/geˤ/, /gam/, /gaˤɪd/, /gaˤ/, /geˤd/
are	قَعَامُ قَاعِدِينَ قَاعًا قَعَدَ	/geˤ/, /gam/, /gaˤdin/, /gaˤ/, /geˤd/

The past tenses are formed by adding **كَانَ** /kaan/ before each copula.

- Almost all of Arabic declensions are omitted in Kuwaiti.
- Dual grammatical person is not used, though dual nouns are still used.
- Feminine forms in plural second and third person are not used.
- The definite article, al- (/al/), became el- (/ɪl-) in Kuwaiti.

Lexicon

Kuwaiti borrowed many words from other languages due to immigration and trade. Below are few examples with the corresponding Arabic words. As noticed, many words come from Persian. This is due to the fact that the only original inhabitants of Kuwait were mixture of Arabs and Persians.

Note: A green box indicates that the MSA word is used in Kuwaiti (most of the times interchangeably), while a red box means it's not.

Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Origin	In Original Language	In Modern Standard Arabic
دِغْمَة	/dɪg.me/	button (A physical button, like in a device, or a digital button, like in a computer program)	Persian or Turkish	دکمه or düğme	زِر
زِرَار	/zrar/	button (in clothes)	Arabic		زِر
شَقَرْدِي	/ʃɪɡerdɪ/	good or kind-hearted person	Persian	شگرونی	طَيِّب
بَخْت	/bext/	luck or fortune	Persian	بخت	حَظ
وَایِر	/wajɪr/	wire	English	---	سِلك
دَبَل	/debel/	double	English	---	ثَنَائِي or مزدوج
أَصْصَعِير	/esˤen.sˤe:r/	lift (elevator)	French	ascenseur	مِصْعَد
تِيلَة	/tiːle/	marble (toy)	Persian	تيله	Does not exist
كُتِر	/ketɪr/	(physical) place or quarter, as in a place in a house	English	quarter	زاوية or مكان
جِگَر	/dʒeːkər/	ugly (often used humourously)	English	joker, from the playing card	قَبِيح (lacks humorous meaning)
رِزْنَامَة	/rɪzname/	calendar	Persian	روزنامه	تَقْوِيم
شُورْبَة	/ʃo:rbe/	soup	Turkish	çorba	حَسَاء
صَالُون	/sˤalo:n/	lounge	French	salon	رَوْحَة
طَرَشِي	/tˤɒrʃi/	pickle	Persian	ترشی	مُخَلَّل
فِلَة	/vɪl.le/	villa	French	villa	Does not exist. However the same word is used sometimes.
نَمْرَة or نِمْرَة	/nimre/ or /nemre/	(phone) number	Romance		رَقْم
بَنَك	/beng/	bank	English	bank	مَصْرِف
يَوَاشْ يَوَاشْ	/jewaʃ jewaʃ/	slow down/be careful	Turkish	yavaş	تَمَثَّل
طُوز	/tˤoːz/	sandstorm	Turkish	toz	عاصفة غبارية/عاصفة ترابية

قز	/gez/	nougat	Persian	گز	نوغته
هم	/hem/	also	Persian	هم	أيضاً
يا	/ja:/	or	Persian	يا	أو
قَز (Homonym of the above word)	/gez/	meander (verb)	English	gaze ^[23]	

Old-fashioned or obsolete words

some words were replaced by native Arabic words over time. A few examples of such words include:^{[24][25]}

- رنق (ring), A Persian word that means colour.
- خاتون (kātūn) "female nurse", from Persian word meaning "noble woman", now replaced with ستر (sister), from English.
- بنسل (binsil), from English *Pencil*.
- كنديشن (candēshin), from English Conditioner (as in Air conditioner).
- فنگر (fingar), from English "finger".^[26]
- كرفاية (karfāya), from Hindi.

Dr. Ya'goob al-Ghaneem points at the increasing numbers of Arab expatriate and exposure to media in different Arabics as the reasons behind this change. Fatima Mahasin hypothesises that the words being replaced are not of English, French or Italian origins, and tend originate from "less-prestigious" languages.^[27]

See also

- Arabic language
- Gulf Arabic

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